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The USSR's "International Economic Security Initiative."

Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's 23 September address to the United Nations General Assembly included a strong pitch to establish a new, comprehensive system of international security--the Soviet theme that ties together all of Gorbachev's disparate disarmament and foreign policy initiatives. Included in the Foreign Minister's speech is a call to establish economic vehicles to channel assistance to Third World countries and to develop a global scientific and technical cooperation program. Both efforts presumably would be carried out under UN auspices. The Soviets have formally introduced a proposal to this effect for consideration at this years UNGA. Economic security, however, is only one small element in the proposal--the reference to it is vague and debt is the only area specifically mentioned. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets first broached their ideas about an economic security initiative in general terms at the United Nations last year. On 17 December 1985 they achieved passage of a UNGA resolution requesting the Secretary General to prepare a study on a system for international economic security to present at the 42nd General Assembly in 1987. At ECOSOC at Geneva in July they submitted a resolution calling upon the Secretary General to identify in that study concrete problems and to propose action-oriented recommendations for dealing with them. Only Syria cosponsored and most developing countries seemed unenthusiastic. [REDACTED]

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Soviet interest in pursuing a multilateral approach to global security problems stems from ideas detailed in Secretary General Gorbachev's report to the Party Congress last February. Unfortunately, the Foreign Minister's UNGA statement sheds no additional light on the Soviet proposal beyond what was offered last February. As outlined by Gorbachev, the security initiative has four elements:

- o A military sphere calling for renunciation by the nuclear powers of either nuclear or conventional war, a variety of arms control agreements, and a mechanism to effect proportional, balanced reductions in military budgets;
- o A political framework for confidence building measures and Helsinki type agreements to ban the use of force in international relations, and drawing up effective methods for preventing international terrorism;

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- o A humanitarian component to provide a vehicle to combat "apartheid and facism" as well as an apparent willingness to resolve family and other human rights cases;
- o An economic segment to establish a system of equal economic security, remove economic blockages and handle economic sanctions, and create vehicles to handle the international debt problem. Included in this proposal is an effort to draw up principles to govern the use of part of the funds released from military budget reductions to provide LDCs some economic relief.

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None of these ideas are new. For the economic items, the Soviets simply have resurrected outdated north-south themes--areas where Soviet economic interests are small and the prospects for political visibility are high. By weaving them together in one overall framework, however, the Soviets are trying to create an illusion of newness and to lend concreteness to what Gorbachev calls "new political thinking" embodied in a series of proposals dating back to early 1986. The Shevardnadze speech is the most recent opportunity for the Soviets to plug their proposed security program. The regional and functional proposals that encompass Moscow's program include:

- o The 15 January plan for the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000;
- o Shevardnadze's mid-January letter to the UN calling for a worldwide congress on the problems of economic security, subsequently reiterated in Gorbachev's party congress speech;
- o The April Soviet statement on the Asian-Pacific Region which called for confidence building measures and a reduction of naval activities in the Pacific, supplemented by the Secretary General's Vladivostok proposal;
- o The 11 June "Budapest" proposal for conventional disarmament in Europe;
- o The 11 June letter to the UN Secretary General outlining a Soviet plan for a new world space organization and a "star peace" program;
- o The Foreign Minister's 8 July letter to the UN proposing an international conference on the Mediterranean and a negotiated withdrawal of the US and Soviet fleets.

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It remains open how serious the Soviets are about pushing their economic security initiative. Soviet officials privately have portrayed the proposal as a responsible initial bid to move economic issues of concern to Moscow into the international arena.

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